

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE
HB 314

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee my name is Chuck Rein. I am here today to represent my ranching interests in Sweet Grass County. I spent several years as Chairman of the Montana Stockgrowers Association Landowner/ Recreation committee. I am familiar with divisive nature of many landowner/sportsman issues. This bill brings divisiveness to a new height. I speak in opposition to HB 314.

Certainly the proponents of this bill understand the ramifications of implementing HB 314. In essence passage of HB 314 will say to all the world that Montanans do not believe in the sanctity of private property rights. Passage of HB 314 sends a message that government is better suited to manage private property. I for one do not subscribe to this premise.

If "harboring" is as big an issue as we have been led to believe then I agree we should look for solutions to the problem. In my opinion we could solve the harboring issue by instating harvest based seasons for elk. In other words close the season when management objectives have been met. So called harbored elk move from property to property as weather conditions, available forage, and hunting pressure dictates. Maybe it is not the landowners fault that, as some claim, we have a serious problem with harbored elk. Maybe the blame should be shouldered by FWP and the old, tired management techniques they refuse to change.

I want to leave you with the thought that there are options that have not been brought before this committee. We need to explore all options before we as citizens of Montana jump into the brackish waters of governmental management of private property. I urge you to oppose HB 314. Thank you.